1. Executive Summary

In recognition of the need to be a strong economic force that is competitive provincially, nationally and internationally, local communities have united to ensure that the Stuart Nechako region is economically diverse and sustainable.

Creating strong relationships and partnerships to increase local socio-economic development is the key role for the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI). REDI is structured to increase the regional capacity to be responsive to business and economic inquiries and opportunities.

In 2003 community leaders established REDI to facilitate a regionally based discussion process to identify and address economic development needs. REDI was incorporated in July 2005 as the Stuart Nechako Regional Economic Development Society.

To facilitate the economic development process and increase community capacity to respond to economic development opportunities REDI will:

- Facilitate collaborative economic development processes that identify regional assets, opportunities and needs.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Regional Economic Development Plan that is reflective of regional priorities.
- Assist with the development of proposals based on needs and priorities identified by community and regional sector groups.
- Secure or assist in accessing funding for individual projects as part of the Regional Economic Development Plan.
- Develop a participatory management and evaluation process to oversee projects from inception to completion.

The cross-cultural participation structure of REDI ensures that all regional communities will be supported in their collaborative efforts to acquire investment funding to create growth, jobs and sustainability while improving the quality of life in the region.

2. Organization

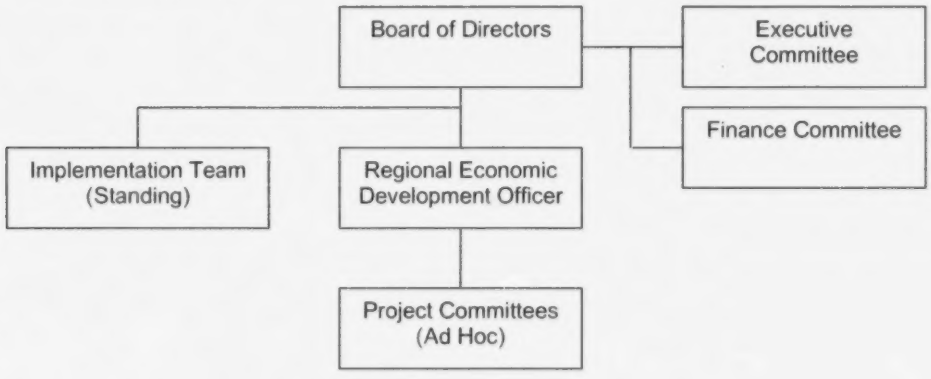
The Stuart Nechako Regional Economic Development Society is a non-profit organization incorporated on July 6, 2005. The Society conducts business as REDI – Regional Economic Development Initiative. The Board of Directors oversees the functioning of the organization. Membership appointment to the Board of Directors and a current list of active organizational participants is located in Appendix A.

Vision
A unified and sustainable economic region.

Mission
To strengthen the regional economy by cultivating collaborative initiatives that creates mutually supportive communities while respecting their diversity.

Objective
To strengthen and diversify the economy of the Stuart Nechako Region.

Organizational Structure



Board of Directors
The Board of Directors has the principal responsibility for fulfilling REDI's mission and the legal accountability for its operations. The Board comprises:

- An Executive Committee – President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer
- A Financial Committee – President, Treasurer and Regional EDO
- Directors at large

The Board of Directors as a group is in charge of:

- Establishing a clear organizational mission.
- Forming the strategic plan to accomplish the mission.
- Overseeing and evaluating the plan's success.
- Hiring a competent Regional Economic Development Officer and providing adequate supervision and support to that individual.
- Ensuring the financial solvency of REDI.
- Interpreting and representing the community to the organization.
- Instituting a system of policies and procedures.

Board meetings will be conducted monthly. When an ad hoc Project Committee is struck a Director must assume the role of Chair.

Regional Economic Development Officer
The Regional EDO reports to the Board of Directors. The Regional EDO works with the Board and Implementation Team to develop the Economic Development Strategy to:

- Participate in regional and community meetings and forums to identify needs, issues and opportunities.
- Develop annual Action and Communication Plans to implement the identified regional economic priorities.
- Work with Project Committees to implement projects resulting from the Action Plan.
- Assist with the development of proposals based on needs and priorities identified by community and regional sector groups.
- Secure or assist in accessing funding for individual projects as part of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.
- Administer REDI's budget/finances, oversee projects and contract employees.
- Carry out the business of the Society.

In addition, the Regional EDO will provide other organizations and interested individuals with information about REDI initiatives and activities. The Regional EDO also chairs the Implementation Team meetings.

Implementation Team
The Board of Directors assigns or invites people from member organizations to participate on the Implementation Team and assigns Board members to attend committee meetings when appropriate to act as champions and/or resource people for key initiatives. The Implementation Team is an advisory standing committee that will meet monthly.

The Implementation Team will:

- Advise the Board on regional economic development needs and issues identified by their community/organization and relevant plans and resources they have or actions they have undertaken.
- Develop short and long-term work plans based on the priorities set by the Board.
- Develop budgets and project funding proposals to acquire the resources to carry out initiatives as approved by the Board.
- Assist REDI staff to obtain the necessary resources to carry out work within the scope and budget of approved initiatives. This may include co-sponsoring projects.

Project Committees
A project committee is formed on an ad hoc basis to undertake specific projects identified on the annual Action Plan. This is an action-oriented committee that will only exist for the duration of the specific project. Committee members will be selected based on their interest or direct involvement in the area/sector/opportunity the project aims to address.

Non-member organizations that would benefit from participation may be asked to assign a member and/or staff to the committee. Project committees also include REDI staff and/or contract specialists as the project scale and scope requires. The Chair of each committee will be responsible for coordinating and reporting on project progress to the Board.

3. Regional Economic Development Strategy

A successful Regional Economic Development Strategy emphasizes the development of a common vision and a shared understanding of the region. This element is fundamental to the ongoing longevity of the initiative. In 2003 Phase I of the two-phase project was initiated. Commencement of the first three steps of the six-step process occurred:

1. Build and develop leadership
2. Articulate a common vision and shared goals
3. Develop an assessment of the current economic reality
4. Frame economic issues, challenges and opportunities
5. Develop action plans (i.e.) sector strategies
6. Mobilize for implementation

To accomplish Phase II the Regional Economic Development Strategy will provide the framework in which REDI can:

- Identify the economic priorities for the region.
- Guide the development of annual Action and Communications Plans that will link the region more closely to current economic opportunities and demands.
- Contribute to the economic development and growth, enhanced employment opportunities and quality of life in the communities.

Objectives

Objectives are the broad goals that specifically focus on achieving the mission. REDI has one primary objective:

- Strengthen and diversify the economy of the Stuart Nechako Region

Strategies

Strategies explain how the objectives will be achieved.

Objective: Strengthen and diversify the economy of the Stuart Nechako Region

1. Strategy: Develop a regional mindset that is positive, innovative, entrepreneurial and action-oriented.

2. Strategy: Develop collaborative organizations, institutions and leaders with the capacity to support, coordinate and lead regional initiatives.

3. Strategy: Market regional resources, services and assets.

Action Plan

The Action Plan provides the scope and schedule details for specific projects that will ensure the strategies are implemented. The Action Plan was developed through an analysis of the historical documentation of the work completed by the Board and recent informal community consultation. The Action Plan will be updated annually to identify:

- Priorities that need to be addressed.
- Projects that need to be implemented.
- Measurable outcomes.
- Process of evaluation.
- Resources required for implementation.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN: January 2006 – March 2007

* A spreadsheet version of the action plan has been provided.

1.0 Develop a regional mindset that is positive, innovative, entrepreneurial and action-oriented.

1.1. Regional Committees Participation
Identify the current committees and their mandates in which REDI board members participate. This will serve to increase regional awareness and knowledge of REDI's activities. In addition, increase REDI board members awareness of regional and provincial activities.

1.2. Regional Sector Meetings
Host quarterly meetings with each sector to determine how REDI can be of assistance and to gain an understanding of the current and future direction each sector is planning.

Sectors include: Agriculture, Business Retail, Construction, Forestry, Health and Social Services, Information Technology, Tourism and Hospitality, Trades Training and Education, Transportation.

2.0 Develop collaborative organizations, institutions and leaders with the capacity to support, coordinate and lead regional initiatives.

2.1. Community Economic Development Committees
A framework will be established to create 3 community economic development committees with local stakeholders to act as a resource for local and regional EDOs. These committees will help provide guidance for the development of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

2.2. Capacity Asset Service Inventory (CAPI)
Completion of Phase II (a status update is needed)

2.3. Community and Regional Planner
Assess the feasibility of hiring a Regional Planner to work with each community to assist with the development and implementation of a regional plan and community plans that support the diversity of each community.

Through a comprehensive community consultation identify the community members best vision for their community. Identify the community ideas for projects that make up the overall vision (i.e.) Fraser Lake – White Swan Beach development, Fort St. James – Historical downtown. Develop a 10-15 year implementation plan that is broken in 1-3 year segments and is adopted by the community.

A transparent process and plan will ensure community participation and continued community support. It will also enable community members, organizations, local and regional businesses and service groups the opportunity to easily participate in the implementation of the community plan.

2.4. Community Capacity Building Workshops
Coordinate and/or lead community to community workshops for skill

development in leadership, financial, volunteer coordination and benchmarking. This will increase community capacity to respond to opportunities. In addition businesses and organizations will be able to access skilled personnel locally or within the region.

2.5. Regional Tourism Marketing Strategy
Assess the feasibility of hiring a marketing contractor to assist Tourism Stuart Nechako to develop a strategy for educating tourism operators about marketing and co-promotion to increase tourism in the region.

In addition, increasing the regional focus and applicability of Tourism Stuart Nechako and assisting with the development of tourism projects (i.e.) Fort Fraser Last Spike Tourism Stop, Murray Ridge Ski Hill, will occur.

2.6. Mutual Aid Agreement/Emergency Preparedness Plan
Coordinate and provide required assistance for the development of formalized regional plans that can be ratified to meet the due diligence needs of the region.

3.0 Market Regional resources, services and assets.

3.1. Community Profiles
Complete comprehensive community profiles for incorporated and rural areas of the region. Wendy Rockafellow, Vanderhoof EDO, has completed the Vanderhoof community profile. Community profiles will increase a community's ability to provide professionally produced comprehensive information easily and quickly to respond to request for information regarding (i.e.) investment opportunities, tourism, quality of life in the communities and region.

This information will also provide the majority of the information for the regional website.

3.2. Regional Website
Websites are generally the first resource potential employees and business investors from outside of the community will review for information. A professionally designed, up to date, user friendly, website and portal will represent the key features of the region (i.e.) investment opportunities, tourism, quality of life.

Community members in each community will be trained to keep the information up to date.

3.3. Trade shows/fairs
Design a display that is available to participate in trade shows and fairs to promote the region's resources, services and assets (i.e.) investment opportunities, tourism, quality of life.

4.0 Regional Economic Development Strategy

4.1. Regional Economic Development Strategy
Create a framework in which to identify regional priorities, guide the development of an annual action plan and communication plan, and contribute to economic growth and development. This will ensure that a shared vision for the region that is being consistently implemented and reviewed annually.

5.0 Communications Plan

5.1. A Communications Plan is the key supporting component of the Economic Strategy required to promote and effectively market the region and it's services, resources and assets to internal and external audiences.

The plan is designed to meet the information needs of the target audience(s), which will be identified using the market research and community and industry assessments. The plan is a living document that will evolve over time. Key components of the communications plan are:

- Establishing measurable goals and objectives
- Identifying target audiences
- Articulating the current situational analysis
- Developing key messages
- Selecting communication channels and appropriate tools
- Evaluating communication methods

Project specific communication plans will be developed as required.

5.2. Professional Photographs

Conduct a request for proposals to have professional photographs of the region taken for all four seasons that have multimedia use for all forms of marketing collateral. Each community will have the opportunity to create the 'shot list' that they feel will best promote their area.

6.0 Public Relations

To increase public awareness and knowledge about REDI and its activities a variety of public relations activities will be initiated.

6.1. Press Releases

Minimum of four press releases per year.

6.2. REDI handout/brochure

Design and develop marketing collateral for distribution throughout the region to increase knowledge of REDI.

6.3. Community Presentations

Conduct in person presentations to interested organizations or businesses in the 3 incorporated communities, the 7 First Nation communities and the Regional Districts.

6.4. Radio Interviews

Monthly radio segments to increase REDI's public profile.

Appendix A

REDI Board of Directors Appointments
As per the Society bylaws the Board of Directors comprises:

1. The elected Mayor of the Village of Fraser Lake, the District of Fort St. James, the District of Vanderhoof and each incorporated community within the Stuart Nechako Region
2. One additional person, preferably representing the Economic Development or Chamber of Commerce function within each community represented by a Mayor, selected by the Mayor and/or elected Council of that community.
3. The elected Directors representing Electoral Areas C, D and F of the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako.
4. The Chair and one other representative from the Community Futures Development Corporation of Stuart Nechako as selected by the CFDC-SN Board of Directors.
5. The elected Chief of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation, the Nak'azdli First Nation, the Saik'uz First nation, the Stellat'en First Nation, the Takla Lake First Nation, the Tl'azt'en First Nation and the Yekooche First Nation.
6. One additional person, preferably representing the Economic Development function within each First Nation selected by the Chief or the elected Council of that First Nation.
7. Members of the Society who have been granted a membership by virtue of their elected position may appoint an alternate as their Official Representative for the full year or balance thereof, by forwarding a letter to the Directors of the Society requesting that the Directors accept the person nominated by the Member requesting an alternate, as the Member's Official Representative.

Current Active Participants
Current organizations with representatives regularly attending meetings include:

- Community Futures Development Corporation – Stuart Nechako
- District of Fort St. James
- District of Vanderhoof
- Nak'azdli First Nation
- Regional District C – Fort St. James
- Regional District D – Fraser Lake
- Regional District F – Vanderhoof
- Village of Fraser Lake